

Idaho Fish and Game Commission
Quarterly Meeting -- May 17-19, 2006
Coeur d'Alene Resort

May 17, 2006

Chairman Wheeler called the meeting to order at 11:54 a.m. with Commissioners Wright, Watts, Power, McDermott, Irby, and Gibbs present.

Lands Workshop

Director Huffaker opened the workshop by emphasizing that the lands and habitat program is the most urgent thing the Department and Commission will address (Appendix 39, Exhibit 46). Development and population growth are having a dramatic impact in the state. Idaho is one of the 6 fastest growing states in the country. Development is taking over agricultural land and ranches, which is the most critical habitat for wildlife. The Department and Commission need to address where people will go to hunt and fish. It is essential to secure critical habitat for fish and wildlife.

Jeff Gould provided the Commission with information on repositioning Department land assets including what properties the Department owns and where they are located, the disposal list, and what funding strings are attached to those properties (Appendix 39, Exhibit 47).

Of the Department's land holdings, 95% is in WMAs. These are focused on foothills (big game winter range), wetlands, and places to hunt for upland birds. The Department's land disposal list was created after an inventory of all properties was conducted and discussion on whether those lands were helping the Department achieve its mission. 1% of the Department's lands inventory showed up on the disposal list. There are currently 27 properties on the disposal list representing 10% of the lands asset value estimated at \$21 million. However, that estimate is not necessarily what the Department can get for those assets.

Mr. Gould provided an overview of each property. In addition to the 27 properties on the 1996 disposal list, there are additional properties that are recommended for disposal – St. Maries WMA, Snow Peak WMA, and three additional back country ranches (Cougar Creek Ranch, Loon Creek Ranch, and Mormon/Pole Creek Ranch). Including these, adds another 1% of inventory estimated at 18% of the asset value or \$40 million (Appendix 39, Exhibit 48).

The state-owned properties purchased with license dollars and those purchased through Federal aid have rules and restrictions regarding their sale and the use of the proceeds. In 1996, the Commission's stated preference was to roll the proceeds into some other land ownership. Deputy Attorney General Dallas Burkhalter clarified that the Commission has statutory authority to acquire land or exchange land for specified purposes, but not authority to outright sell property. The Department has always used the state land board for sale of public property. The problem is a constitutional limitation that requires that kind of sale to be done at public auction which would allow the public to bid, with the sale going to the highest bidder. The Department cannot sell land for cash to the Forest Service. The alternatives would be to use managed, multi-party exchanges or to approach the legislature to grant the Commission direct statutory authority to sell property

without going through the state land board. The Department has done multi-party exchanges in the past, but they are very complex.

Gregg Servheen briefed the Commission on the wildlife mitigation program. There are two projects – Albeni Falls and the Southern Idaho Project that resulted from the Power Planning Act and the debt for hydropower projects. The Bonneville Power Administration owes a wildlife debt to the people of Idaho. BPA is the funding authority, and the Northwest Power Conservation Council is the governor-appointed body that oversees fish and wildlife programs funded by BPA. The Department operates within limits as specified by BPA and NWPCC. BPA provides both capital and operation and maintenance funding for mitigation. BPA is interested in negotiating to relieve that obligation. Those costs keep going up, and BPA still has 82% of its mitigation debt remaining on Albeni falls and 69% for Southern Idaho. There is no timeline for completion of this mitigation debt. The Department could pursue a negotiated settlement with BPA. Montana settled for \$12 million, paid \$2 million per year for 6 years. They put the proceeds into a trust and have realized about 190,000 acres of wildlife habitat thus far. Staff has talked with them about the process and the results. There are policy issues with settlement, which would involve agreement of Tribal partners, BPA negotiations, and coordination with NWPCC.

Mr. Servheen briefed Commissioners on conceptual area plans. There is no set formula, but they should be based on priorities. There are three types of approaches:

1. Basic Approach – American Farmland Trust – high quality farmland defined and how sprawling development threatens this land.
2. Mid-range approach – TNC approach of conservation by design – what is highest priority in terms of biodiversity.
3. Cadillac Approach – Wisconsin example – Land Legacy – public access, wildlife conservation, “pearl” areas, linkage across vital areas, and farming/rural ranching. Have an inventory of places to focus in the future. Where conservation needs to occur for recreation and wildlife conservation.

The Department recommends the following steps to the Commission regarding land assets:

- Develop conceptual area plans
- Classify all backcountry ranches, Snow Peak WMA, and St. Maries WMA for disposal
- Sell disposal list parcels purchased with Department funds for cash
- Sell or exchange backcountry ranches for greatest benefit to wildlife
- Pursue cash settlement agreement of Idaho wildlife debt with BPA
- Develop a Wildlife Legacy Fund framework

This summer the Director would like to discuss the repositioning of Department land holding with hunters and anglers around the state to get their input and buy in. Commissioners discussed potential issues and whether this effort should be broader and inclusive of other land use interests to create a broader land legacy as Wisconsin did. The Department needs a solid plan to move forward. There are areas in the state that are already out of reach. Land is a limited resource.

The Commission recessed for lunch at 12:25

The workshop was called to order at 1:50 p.m.

Mr. Servheen provided Commissioners with a binder detailing the properties on the disposal list (Appendix 39, Exhibit 49).

Commissioners discussed concerns over the public auction of lands. Commissioners weren't comfortable approving complete disposal of back country ranches. They discussed the need to maintain an administrative site on some of the back country ranches to ensure Department access and activities. The Department could negotiate conservation easements as part of the sales. Staff will determine what we will be needed for administrative purposes on the properties.

Commissioners agreed that it would be advisable to dispose of at least some of the surplus lands. The Commission should work with the Legislature to ensure they are comfortable with the Commission having a lands fund. The Department will need legislative approval on transactions going through the land board. Commissioners discussed pursuing statutory authority to allow them to sell land outright.

Mr. Gould clarified that these sales won't happen simultaneously. The Director commented that by the end of the day, staff would like to have Commission approval to put together a plan to dispose of properties.

The Chairman asked Commissioners what their main concerns were and what they would like to see done. They discussed the following:

- Legislative issues – the ability to get authority to sell property straight off and the ability to have an investment fund.
- The purpose of the conceptual area plans.
- What would the Commission do with the money.
- Why the Department needs new areas. Have to convince sportsmen of the reason to do it.
- How to package and promote
- Some issues with administrative function on backcountry ranches.
- Need to think of large trades.
- Chair suggest bringing someone in who is an expert in setting up this kind of fund. Concerned about losing the fund.
- Needs to be a statewide effort.
- Need a vision or purpose – an outline of what will be done with the money.
- Need to have a clear plan.

Cal Groen, Regional Supervisor from the Clearwater Region, explained how the Dworshak Reservoir Wildlife Settlement with BPA was accomplished. This \$18 million sixty-year mitigation settlement lead to the acquisition of the 60,000 acres Peter T. Johnson segment of the Craig Mountain Habitat Management Area.

Commissioners concurred that the Department should pursue a settlement with the BPA and the Tribes. Commissioners should contact legislators they have relationships with to get their input on the idea. The Director clarified that first the Department will get the plan together. The Department will then need to go to the Governor's office, the Northwest Power and Conservation Council, and the state to make sure everyone is on the same page. The Director will be going to Washington, DC this summer and can talk to the delegation about the issue. It may be a good idea to have a Commissioner go along.

Staff and Commissioners discussed next steps in the process which include:

- Draft the conceptual area plans
- Articulate the vision and purpose and define the goals.
- Staff work on backcountry ranches – list of suggested withholdings/easements we would place on them before divesting.
- Start on BPA process
- Is what we are doing with current holdings the best we can do? If there is a perception that this is not the case, there will not be strong support for acquiring more.
- Address the Commission's authority on how the land is sold.
- Explore whether the Commission could gift some of the low value properties to the city or county.
- Within the next month, Commissioners should contact the Director with questions or concerns regarding the disposal list or things that should be added that are significant. Intent with surplus property list is that it remain in the public domain – not go to private holders.
- Commission should take an active role in meeting with governor's office and legislative leadership to see what the reaction is.
- Start meeting with sportsmen to talk about what the Department is doing.
- Create a whitepaper on the lands legacy concept.
- Put together a Powerpoint presentation on the concept for educational purposes.
- Draft talking points. Need to be careful about the language that is used to describe this concept and focus on repositioning assets rather than selling land.
- Discuss the plan with county commissioners.
- Work with Cattle Association and Farm Bureau.

Regional supervisors provided input on surplus resources in their area and how they are addressing land use issues. Comments included:

- The need to draw and label maps to avoid public concerns.
- Whether the Department should add to existing parcels or acquire new parcels.
- How developers might be able to help with mitigation and the decline in quality and opportunity.
- How to work with counties and ITD where development is likely to occur and where those overlap with areas where wildlife is congregated or likely to travel.
- The need to build relationships with county commissioners and legislators.
- How to deal with landowners surrounded by public land with depredation problems and with corporate lands.
- Take operation and maintenance into consideration when acquiring additional property and managing the fund.

The Director commented that it will be important to make sure that people know this repositioning is to acquire other key land not to give the Department more operating funds. It will also be important to show early, good success stories and the benefit to Idaho.

Public Meeting

The meeting was called to order at 7:11 p.m. Chairman Wheeler welcomed the public and introduced Commissioners Watts, Gibbs, McDermott, Irby, Wright, and Power. Director Huffaker introduced staff present.

Chairman Wheeler opened the meeting to public comment.

Jim Carothers, Treasurer of the Lake Pend Oreille Idaho Club, expressed concerns related to the Department's proposed changes in fishing regulations. He opposes the opening of the Clark Fork River for fishing. He stated the Department has no population estimate for rainbow trout and it is premature to attack the population in spawning tributaries. In recent derbies, the rates and sizes of rainbow have decreased substantially, which shows that the rainbow population in the lake is already suppressed. Anglers can be effective and suppress the population.

Kurt Artner, owner and operator of Pend Oreille Charters, spoke on behalf of the Charter Captains of Lake Pend Oreille in opposition to opening the tributaries of Lake Pend Oreille and the Clark Fork River. They believe that trophy kamloops and bull trout will be taken over by mackinaw. Charter captains feel that if the kamloops and mackinaw are gone, the negative economic impact will be significant. The tributaries are the hatcheries for the kamloops and mackinaws. People will fish there to get a trophy. Mr. Artner participated on the Kokanee Recovery Task Force. He stated that the Department promised if anglers harvested kamloops and mackinaws from the Lake, the Department would not open the Clark Fork River and tributaries. If this happens, people will stop fishing the Lake.

Brian Steele, from Rathdrum, explained that he has been trying for the last six months to put together a handicapped hunt in Unit 11 on Craig Mountain. He has contacted landowners in Unit 11 and asked them to donate permits to provide 2-4 handicapped kids with a good hunt. Mr. Steele wants access behind 2-3 gates to hunt. Nez Perce County Sheriffs Posse wants to help. Fish and Game won't allow them to go behind gates. The Region has told him to go hunt on private land. They shouldn't have to go to private land, when Craig Mountain WMA is state land. The Region would look good in the Lewiston area if they would help.

Douglas Setter, representing the North Idaho Tree Hound Association, expressed concern about proposed regulation changes on bobcat hunting. There may be problem with cougar hunters breaking the law and hunting at night. However, hound hunters should not be penalized. They should be allowed to continue to hunt at night. Illegal night hunting of cougar can be addressed with harvested cougar check in requirements. Requiring a fully inflated eyeball be removed at the check-in will allow a wildlife lab to determine if the cougar was taken during daylight or after dark. Mr. Setter asked the Commission not to penalize a non-target group.

Roy Stokes, of Post Falls, Idaho, is the VP of the Lake Coeur d'Alene Anglers' Association. He also served on the Kokanee Recovery Task Force. He stated the Task Force was a farce, and the Department deliberately misled fellow sportsmen. He claimed the decision on how to address the kokanee issue had already been decided before the Task Force was ever formed and officials are bringing a fraudulent proposal. He feels the small fish are the real problem, and mackinaws have become a problem because of the way they have been managed. He advocated stabilizing the kokanee plantings. If you kill the adult rainbows, the mackinaws will take over. He feels the Department betrayed him and other sportsmen, and they have never made the right decision for this Lake.

Jim Hagedorn, from Viola, Idaho, wants pheasants in North Idaho. Latah County has lot of habitat suited for pheasants. He would like the commission to direct Region 1 and 2 to work on a plan.

Steven Klappenbach, spoke as a representative for the Bonner County Sportsmen Association. He has been working with Commissioner McDermott on the Lake Recovery Task Force and has followed the fisheries issues all his life and seen dramatic changes. He stated the mandate is to manage the Lake as a rainbow fishery. The proposed regulation changes are geared at removing rainbows, but fisheries Managers have not gotten an accurate estimate of the total rainbow trout population in the Lake and they have not been able to get a count of how many rainbows are moving into the rivers. Mr. Klappenbach believes that a better diversity in fish size will be achieved through removal of rainbows in the lake. Opening the tributaries to allow take of spawning rainbows will affect fish of every size and species. As a last resort, he feels electro shocking and removal of a more diverse size range of rainbow would be more desirable than the destruction of brood stock and their young. The Department needs better modeling of the rainbow population. The population of lake trout far exceeds the population of rainbow, and they are the real predator and must be stopped. Mr. Klappenbach asked the Commission to give the programs recommended by the Task Force a chance to work.

Nate Helm, Executive Director of Sportsmen for Fish and Wildlife, thanked Commissioners Irby and McDermott for attending SFW meetings in the northern regions. Mr. Helm commented that wolves and de-listing are the apex topic for SFW and there must be more effort to keep the issue at the forefront. He also stated that SFW is working in cooperation with other sportsmen conservation groups to provide holistic goals for mule deer from an Idaho sportsmen's objective. He has observed interaction between wildlife managers and sportsmen's groups and the Department's presentation is one of acceptance and the attitude of "this is the best we can do." There has been agreement on mule deer management among sportsmen. The Department is preparing a statewide survey, and SFW fears it will create division and that conclusions could be in error. If hunters say they want to hunt every year, it doesn't mean they won't stand for restrictions.

Hobart Jenkins, representing Bayview Chamber of Commerce, is also a member of the Kokanee Recovery Task Force. He commented that he did not experience what Mr. Stokes referenced with respect to his participation on the Task Force. The issue of opening tributaries to Lake Pend Oreille has become a more emotional issue than a scientific issue. When predator control becomes necessary for the survival of a prey species, good science and management come together to maximize the beneficial impacts of the predator control. This would be simple if it weren't for public perception. The lay public is conditioned to protect fish in their spawning habitat. There is already a significant predator control effort in place and functioning. There is a planned evaluation at the end of August to see if it is working. If the goals are achieved, it may not be necessary to take rainbow out of the spawning area. If the goals are not reached, there is still time to take more drastic action which could include electro shocking. He commented that the task force agreed that restoring kokanee was the top priority but didn't agree on the methods to achieve this. The issue is not kokanee recovery but the opposition to harvesting rainbow in the spawning tributaries. At this point, it is not clear whether it is necessary to kill spawners. When the data is in late this summer, there will be a better case for opening the tributaries if necessary. He believes that the Lake Pend Oreille Club and Bonner County Sportsmen Association will support the Department if there is a more clear cut data base to support the opening of the lower river to year

round fishing. Haste is not needed and the overall goal of kokanee recovery is not adversely impacted by waiting another four months.

Gary Queen, of Cataldo, Idaho, manages Rose Lake Elk Ranch and is on the Board of Directors of the Elk Breeders' Association. He spoke regarding his concerns about CWD. Mr. Queen contended that in 2004 a wild mule deer that had CWD was brought into the state from Wyoming. Elk came in from Wyoming this year that were brucellosis positive, and they were slaughtered in Idaho. Brucellosis can be passed to people and results in undulant fever. Mr. Queen stated that the Department tried to push a bill through the Legislature this past session to ban importation of domestic cervids into the state under the guise of protecting state wildlife from CWD. All of the blame is targeted at domestic cervid operators. Fish and Game doesn't live up to the same standards that are required of the game farms. Wild game that comes into the state doesn't have to be tested, but domestic game does. More CWD testing should be done at Fish and Game check stations. The industry is concerned about CWD. Their lobbyist went to JFAC to get the Caine Center funding needed for CWD testing. The industry has tried to work with Fish and Game staff on a program to deal with egress or ingress issues, but the Department breaks off communication when they get close to an agreement. A member of the Elk Breeders' Association had taken elk to Woods Meats for slaughter, and Woods Meats had been directed by Fish and Game to keep elk blood to use it for bear bait. He suspects the Department is trying to train bears to go after elk calves. Mr. Queen wants to work with the Department. The Elk Breeders don't want to be enemies with Fish and Game.

Joseph Peterson, of the Flying B Ranch, in Kamiah, commented on the land exchange to be approved by the Commission tomorrow. He sees his clients as the general public and his purpose as to meet the demand for fish and wildlife recreation. The Department's position of not allowing outfitting for upland game and waterfowl is in direct conflict with the Department's ability to achieve that same goal. Outfitting may be one of the best ways to provide fish and wildlife opportunity in the future. Mr. Petersen quoted from Petersen's hunting about the skyrocketing cost of hunting land. The Department's position is short-sighted. Private landowners will exclude the general public. If an outfitter can lease the land, they can provide opportunity to the public.

Ed Lindahl, from Sagle ID spoke on the kokanee situation, SJR106, and the Compass. He supports the Commission and Regional Supervisor Chip Corsi regarding the plans to control predation on kokanee in Lake Pend Oreille. Sportsmen need to help the Department in dealing with the catastrophic situation. Implore those opposed to think about the greatest concern which is the kokanee. Mr. Lindahl stated that he was appalled at the Commission's failure to take a position on SJR 106, the Constitutional Amendment to establish the right to hunt and fish. He feels the Commission took the easy way out. The issue will be back next year, and Mr. Lindahl implored the Commission to get on the front end of it. The Commission represents hunters, anglers, and trappers. Mr. Lindahl commended the Commission subcommittee who worked on the final revision of the Compass for protecting hunter, angler, trapper license dollars. He feels there is a lack of protection of PR and DJ money. The wildlife watchers don't pay the way that hunters, anglers, and trappers. He recommend that the Commission consider adopting Concerned Sportsmen of Idaho's revision of the Compass.

Dwain Lowry of Osburn, Idaho, spoke on outfitted turkey hunts. The private land is available to outfitters to use for turkey hunting and it hasn't been put to full use because it costs too much and turkeys don't stay on the private land. Habitat is restricted on public land so turkeys are spread out

over a large area. Monetary gain from planted birds shouldn't be hunted in an outfitter situation on hunter lands. Mr. Lowry also spoke regarding electronic devices on firearms. He works in sporting goods store in Wallace, and there is a lot of new technology on firearms. The Commission has a restriction against anything electronic being attached to a firearm. He feels a lot of new things are beneficial – scopes with range finders, and digital and optical magnification on scopes, etc. These devices make the sportsmen the most efficient, cleancut hunters possible.

David Bennett, of Bayview, Idaho, is a retired professor for the department of fish and wildlife at University of Idaho and a certified fisheries scientist with the American Fisheries Society since 1972. He has studied lakes and reservoirs for 40 years and lives on Lake Pend Oreille. The issue on LPO is excessive predator numbers. As a scientist, he likes to base decisions on data and not emotion. He feels the Department has good, solid information on which to make the decision. Mr. Bennet provided a chronology of data since 2000 when Fish and Game liberalized seasons on kamloops. Anglers have had six years to decrease predator numbers, but the opposite has happened. Kokanee survival and numbers returning to spawn is decreasing. There is less than a decade to address long-term survival of kokanee in Lake Pend Oreille. If nothing drastic is done, we will lose the kokanee. Without kokanee, the kamloops will follow. Lake trout and bull trout will then compete and bull trout will go extinct. The lunker lake trout fishery will also be gone. The only feasible recommendation is to harvest predators by any means possible. It is not a pretty recommendation, but the data supports it. He recommended commercially fishing lake trout and knock it down by 60-70% and harvest of kamloops whenever and wherever possible. Recent research showed that the consumption of kokanee by kamloops had been overestimated. However, the consumption by adult lake trout was considerably higher. Without significant predator reduction, kokanee will go extinct. There is no record in the distribution of this species where there has been a recovery. Even if the science is wrong, all we have done is to knock back these predator populations, which will recover. If we do nothing, we will lose kokanee, kamloops, and large lake trout. Science needs to dictate the decision. If you look at the data, it is a good solid database to work from.

The Chairman thanked the public for their comments.

The meeting adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

May 18, 2005

MISCELLANEOUS

Opening Comments

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Cameron Wheeler at 8:15 a.m. Commissioners Watts, Irby, Wright, Gibbs, Power, McDermott, and Irby, and Secretary Steve Huffaker were present.

Agenda Changes

Agenda Items # 14 and #23 will be exchanged. Agenda Item #16A, which is a budget adjustment, was added.

Review of Public Comment

Commissioner McDermott commented that the Lake Pend Oreille issue is a very emotional issue. Reality and perception are not the same, and there is a lot of misinformation out there. It can take a long time to make changes when it is an emotional issue. Some of the suggestions made at the public meeting may be worth considering. The goal is to take out 5,000 rainbows. It might be possible to delay opening up fishing on the Clark Fork until a review has been done to see if other measures are meeting that goal. Some would like to see the Lake turn into a lake trout fishery. In the early 60s, there were hundreds of kokanee fishermen on the lake. Anglers harvested over 1 million kokanee in the late 50s. There is a huge economic impact to losing the kokanee fishery.

Chairman Wheeler also touched on the handicapped hunt in Unit 11. The Director explained that the Department has a management plan for access on Craig Mountain, and there are handicapped access areas. Mr. Steele wants a different opportunity to get a trophy elk. The Region has tried to work with him and provide alternatives. The Region has gone over and above to provide opportunities for the disabled. .

The Commissioners talked about the issue of hound hunting at night. It is an enforcement issue, but cougar hunters don't want to be penalized for the misdeeds of a few.

Commissioners discussed weapons technology and requested that staff put together a workshop on the topic before the January meeting to discuss non-biological rules.

Commissioner McDermott commented that domestic cervid farms are a threat to hunting. However, those operations are regulated by the Department of Agriculture. It would require a legislative change or a voter initiative to make domestic cervid farms illegal. There are several new operations in eastern Idaho. Deputy Director Mansfield explained that the Department has written agreements with operators around the state, and staff are working to maintain a three-way dialog with the Department of Agriculture and the elk breeders. Commissioner Gibbs requested that the record to show that Mr. Queen is wrong about the Department bringing CWD to the state and spreading brucellosis. Mr. Queen is totally off base on this issue. People eat meat from animals with brucellosis all the time. All the western states are doing all that is reasonable and rational to slow or stop the spread of CWD. Some domestic cervid operators think the Department should be under the same obligations they are to deal with these diseases in the wild populations. That is not possible.

Commissioner Power commented that he talked with Ed Lindahl regarding the Compass and how PR and DJ funds are represented. They are included in the Compass as funding sources.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

The Director read a letter from Dale Hall, of the USFWS, notifying the Department that Idaho's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy was approved. The Department is proceeding with implementation. The Director noted Tab 4 in Commissioner's Agenda books, which is an extensive report from staff on Department activities and developments. Summer is shaping up to be very busy. The Director will attend the Project Wild National conference in New Orleans May 29-June 3, the Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee summer meeting in Montana June 6-8, and he will be going to Washington, DC, June 27-29 to brief congressmen on grizzly bear delisting. The Tri-State

meeting will be held in August, and the WAFWA Annual Meeting will be in North Dakota July 21-27. Commissioner Watts will attend WAFWA as the Commission's representative.

MISCELLANEOUS

Commission Reports

Clearwater Region:

Commissioner Irby reported that steelhead fishing has been tremendous. The water is high in the Clearwater, and this could be a flood year. Turkey hunting season has been good this year. He thanked the Commission for allowing the youth to go out a week early. This creates a lot of excitement, and there were lots of turkeys taken by kids. The Commissioner commented that two people at the public meeting offered their property for pheasant habitat in the north. The Clearwater still has wolves, and it will continue to be a big topic in the state. The region is losing more collared animals than anticipated, and the Department needs to find out why.

Panhandle Region: Commissioner McDermott reported that he is working on a cooperative agreement with Department of Lands in grizzly bear country. They provided funding to monitor gates to track grizzlies. Turkey season has gone extremely well. Sandpoint students participated in habitat typing in newly acquired Albeni Falls mitigation land. He will talk about Lake Pend Oreille issues tomorrow.

Salmon Region: Commissioner Power reported that Fisheries continue to work with private land owners on watershed projects including a livestock exclusion fence. People are very happy with what is going on with fisheries efforts. The salmon screen projects, programs in the classroom and field experiences for students are very well received. It shows the Region is working with people to solve problems. The Region continues to work on reconnectivity of creeks with the main river. Wolves continue to be a big issue. A big case involving incidental poisoning in 2003 is coming up in Pocatello. Judges in the Region have been sentencing violators to community service. Crews did work on the Moen property for fencing, etc. The anti-wolf coalition, which is centralized in Salmon, made a and quite a push to get a voter initiative. Had calls on opinion on the initiative. They failed to get the required signatures. There have been more instances of 10j control of wolves in the Region. The Region has lost over 70% of radio collared fawns. The bighorn sheep on the river look really good.

Southwest Region: Commissioner Watts reported that fawn mortality is the big issue in the region, which lost 96% of the fawns collared in the Garden Valley area. Al Van Vooren, Regional Supervisor for many years, has decided to retire, and a search is underway for his replacement. There is a lot of discussion in the region about WMAs. The Region might have cause to look at reducing goose take, as nests near shorelines are being lost due to high water in the river. The Region is working with the YMCA on their plans for a camp on land near Horsethief Reservoir in Valley County. The Region is working with angler clubs to restock Crappe in Paddock Reservoir.

Magic Valley Region: Commissioner Wright reported the Region has lots of water. Reservoirs are full and fishing prospects are good. The Regions fawn mortality was around 50% which is about average. Upland bird activity remains important with mountain quail and Columbian sharp-tailed grouse. The Region has a big effort to survey sage grouse leks underway. This is being funded by BLM. The data is being compiled, but it looks like sage hen numbers are about what they have

been although populations have been trending upward since 1994. The habitat staff is working with local schools to plant bitterbrush on mule deer ranges. Enforcement is busy citing rock chuck and rabbit hunters who don't have licenses. Hunter ed classes are filling fast and there is a lot of interest in online classes. The Region recently hosted a meeting for the Mule Deer Foundation, SFW, RMEF, and other sportsmen groups to talk about the Mule Deer Initiative. It was well attended. The majority of those attending felt strongly about doe hunting, especially closing doe hunting in certain areas. Former commissioner Fred Wood is campaigning for Bruce Newcomb's seat in the legislature and to maintain a mid-September opening date for chukar season.

Southeast Region: Commissioner Gibbs reported that Region 5's fawn mortality is high in units with high snowfall. Soda Springs fawns were heavier than Bear Lake fawns, but they had higher mortality. The results are puzzling, and there may be something else going on in the deer herds. The Region had a significant poaching incident about 6 weeks ago when a young man shot 5-6 deer. CAP got involved with reward money, and good publicity and sportsmen's groups contributed. They have issued citations and hope to close that case. Commissioner Gibbs has gotten very few calls, so regional staff are doing good job of dealing with people. He has heard some concerns about elk rules.

Upper Snake Region: Chairman Wheeler reported that fawn weights were high going into winter, but the Region still had 80% mortality. It doesn't jive with traditional thinking. They don't know what the cause was. Wildlife Services has killed lots of coyotes in that area. The Region planted 50,000 shrubs in the area and is working on aspen recovery. Those planting are finding dead animals as they are working. People are commenting on the die off. Henry's Lake will be good fishing this year. Rivers are high. The Region had its first 10j wolf kill in Victor. All went well. The landowner worked with the Department and it worked as it was supposed to. The Region is starting to have real livestock concerns with at least 2-3 more packs in the last year. The Chairman went down the middle fork with Gary Power and saw lots of animals.

Commissioner Power commented on two retiree deaths in their Region. Mel Reingold, former Regional Supervisor and Jo Wenger, former office coordinator. It has been a sad time for the Region.

Consent Calendar

06-27 Commissioner Irby moved and Commissioner Gibbs seconded a motion **TO APPROVE THE CONSENT CALENDAR INCLUDING THE MINUTES OF THE MARCH 1-3 MEETING, AND THE MARCH 8, MARCH 15, MARCH 22, MARCH 29, AND APRIL 28 CONFERENCE CALLS AS PRINTED. The motion carried unanimously.**

RULES

Upland Game Proposals

Don Kemner, Wildlife Staff Biologist, updated the Commission on upland game harvest for 2005 presented six proposed changes (Appendix 39, Exhibit 50)

1. Extend the pheasant season closing date to December 31st in Minidoka and Cassia counties.
2. Extend the quail season closing date to January 31 in the Magic Valley region.
3. Extend the chukar/gray partridge closing date to January 31 in Magic Valley, Southeast, Upper Snake and Salmon regions.

4. Require upland game and upland game bird hunters to wear hunter orange while hunting on lands where the Department stocks upland game birds.
5. The motor vehicle rule would apply thru January 31 in the Magic Valley, Upper Snake, Southeast and Salmon regions if recommendations 2 and 3 are approved.
6. Allow handicapped hunters possessing a permit to use a crossbow or any device that holds a bow at partial or full draw as a legal method of take for all upland game (includes turkeys).

Commissioners discussed limiting the requirement to wear hunter orange to department-owned land (WMAs).

06-28 Commissioner Wright moved and Commissioner Power seconded **TO ADOPT AS A TEMPORARY RULE STAFF RECOMMENDATION REGARDING THE REQUIREMENT TO WEAR HUNTER ORANGE ON DEPARTMENT WMAS WHERE BIRDS ARE STOCKED.** The motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner Watts discussed the work by Richard Renstrom on ruffed grouse and commented that the Department does not have a rigorous, extensive grouse research methodology. Mr. Renstrom suggests the ruffed grouse may be in trouble, and the Department shouldn't just ignore it. He would like the Commission to consider at least some of Mr. Renstrom's recommendations.

The Chairman commented that it is hard for the Commission to accept outside proposals and research. The Director commented that the body of research in the Midwest is extensive and shows that ruffed grouse populations are very cyclical, but those management agencies maintain a stable season. It would be expensive and time consuming to do a comprehensive study. Idaho populations are down, but there is no justification to do anything with the seasons today.

Commissioner Irby commented that he has read Mr. Renstrom's literature and has talked to staff in his region. He is interested in the issue but would hate to see the Commission change the seasons now.

Don Kemner acknowledged Mr. Renstrom's work and the Department is looking at additional study of ruffed grouse.

Dove and Sandhill Crane

Tom Hemker, Wildlife Program Coordinator, presented staff recommendations, which do not propose any change to dove, sandhill crane and early goose seasons. Idaho has not had an early goose season in the past few years. There is a liberal crane allocation as they are doing well in the Rocky Mountains. Last year, the Department did not issue all the permits allocated. Dove seasons have not changed since 1998, and populations are declining slightly. This is mostly a habitat issue, but the Department is not recommending any change to dove seasons at this time.

- Do not offer any early goose seasons. The regular goose season is expected to be 107 days statewide and should provide adequate harvest of resident Canada geese.
- Adopt the sandhill crane season as follows with a daily limit of 2 and a season limit of 9. The first tag is offered through a standard controlled-hunt drawing and the other 8 are available at any vendor as left-over tags.

Hunt Area	Season	Permits
Caribou and Bear Lake counties	9/1-15	300
Teton County	9/1-7	50
“	9/8-15	50
Fremont County	9/1-7	50
“	9/8-15	50

- No change to the mourning dove season, which is 9/1-15 and a bag of 10 and 20.

06-29 Commissioner Gibbs moved and Commissioner Irby seconded **TO ADOPT BY PROCLAMATION STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DOVE, SANDHILL CRANE AND EARLY GOOSE SEASONS AS PRESENTED.** The motion carried in a unanimous vote.

REPORTS

Sage Grouse Plan

Tom Hemker updated the Commission on the status of the statewide Sage Grouse Plan (Appendix 39, Exhibit 51). The Plan went out for public comment in March and April. There were comments on how the state plan related to local plans, the ranking of threats, allowing local working groups to determine feasibility of conservation measures, requirements to implement conservation measures and use a facilitator, and securing funding for on-the-ground work. Some counties wanted a way to sign on to the agreement, and the group is developing an MOU template for those counties.

Over the next two months final edits will be made, presented to the subcommittee and then presented to the full advisory committee in July. The target is to then get agency heads to sign the plan in July. Mr. Hemker requested that the Commission authorize the Director to sign the document in July.

06-30 Commissioner Irby moved and Commissioner Watts seconded a motion **TO AUTHORIZE THE DIRECTOR TO SIGN THE SAGE GROUSE PLAN WHEN IT IS FINAL.** The motion carried in a unanimous vote.

RULES

Upland Game (cont.)

06-31 Commissioner Gibbs moved and Commissioner Irby seconded a motion **TO ACCEPT STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS ON UPLAND GAME AS PRESENTED.**

Commissioner Watts reiterated his position that there is merit in pursuing more study on ruffed grouse. The Director commented that staff will look at forest grouse (ruffed grouse) and make some recommendations on where we go from here.

Commissioner Wright commented on the proposal to extending the pheasant season in the Mini-Cassia area. He has received calls from people opposed to keeping it open for another month.

They don't think the number of birds will support it, and Pheasants Forever have come out opposed to extending that season. He questioned how the survey was taken.

The Chairman commented that the Commission does not have to act based solely on public input. It is one tool.

The motion was withdrawn.

06-31 Commissioner Watts moved and Commissioner Gibbs seconded **TO ADOPT BY PROCLAMATION STAFF RECOMMENDATION FOR UPLAND GAME BIRDS AS PRESENTED SPECIFIC TO CHUKAR, QUAIL, GREY PARTRIDGE, AND GROUSE** (Appendix 39, Exhibit 50). The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Kemner explained the position that the pheasant population can support more opportunity is based on brood numbers in Magic Valley showing that populations have increased. The harvest would be male birds only. Pheasant populations rely more on the female population and their ability to reproduce. Biology is in one place, and public values are in another place. The Commission has to sort the social from the biological and decide which way to go.

06-32 Commissioner Wright moved and Commissioner Irby seconded **TO ADOPT BY PROCLAMATION THE STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING PHEASANT SEASONS AS PRESENTED** (Appendix 39, Exhibit 50). The motion carried unanimously.

The Chairman asked for consideration on chukar hunting in winter months. Some people do take undue advantage of that opportunity.

06-33 Commissioner Watts moved **TO ADOPT AS A TEMPORARY RULE STAFF RECOMMENDATION ON THE USE OF CROSSBOWS FOR UPLAND GAME HUNTING FOR THE DISABLED**.

Commissioners discussed that there could be an issue on WMAs. The Department could post the WMAs to restrict the use of crossbows.

The motion was withdrawn.

Commissioners Watts and Wright will talk to the disabled groups and bring a proposal back regarding the use of crossbows by the disabled. Folks with disabilities have approached the Department about special seasons for the disabled. They have planned a meeting with these parties and will include this topic.

06-34 Commissioner Watts moved and Commissioner Power seconded a motion **TO REJECT THE STAFF RECOMMENDATION ON THE USE OF CROSSBOWS BY THE DISABLED TO HUNT UPLAND GAME**. The motion passed in a unanimous vote.

Furbearer Proposals

Don Kemner presented recommended changes to furbearer seasons (Appendix 39, Exhibit 52). The recommendations are consistent with the Department's furbearer management policies.

The Department is proposing 7 changes to the 2006-2007 and 2007-2008 seasons:

1. Open otter season concurrent with the beaver season.
2. Expand boundaries of controlled beaver trapping Unit 201; increase beaver harvest to 15 in controlled beaver trapping Units 201 and 2002.
3. Close beaver season on public lands on Wood Creek in the Danskin Mountains east of Boise and north of Mountain Home, Lake Creek which is a tributary of Fall Creek but flows into Anderson Ranch Reservoir, and Wilson, Little Wilson, and Elk Creek on Wilson Flat north of Anderson Ranch Dam in Elmore County for beaver re-introduction program.
4. Close beaver season on Middle Creek in Clark County above the Forest Service boundary for beaver re-introduction program.
5. Close beaver season on Tex Creek WMA for beaver re-introduction program as part of the Mule Deer Initiative.
6. Open beaver season on Patterson Creek in Teton County.
7. Establish hunting hours of ½ hour before sunrise to ½ hour after sunset for bobcat, fox, and badger to address enforcement conflict with mountain lion hunting.

The Department did take public comment on most of these proposals. The recommendations on beaver season closings came in after the general survey, but trappers were surveyed.

Commissioners discussed the application of hunting hours. Commissioner Irby asked about trapping season on fishers. Mr. Kemner indicated there is research being done on the fisher population in the Clearwater Region, but the Department doesn't have enough information to do anything at this time.

06-35 Commissioner Watts moved and Commissioner Irby seconded **TO ADOPT AS TEMPORARY RULES STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS ON FURBEARERS EXCEPT FOR HUNTING HOURS FOR BADGER, FOX, AND BOBCAT.** The motion carried unanimously.

REPORTS

Outfitters and Guides Report

Commissioner Gibbs explained that the Idaho Outfitters and Guides Licensing Board (IOGLB) is made up of three outfitters, a member of the public at large, and a member appointed by the Department of Fish and Game. IDFG defrays the expense for that appointee. The IOGLB meets quarterly. Guides and outfitters are most active from Memorial Day through mid-November.

Issues that have come to the IOGLB recently include a draft MOU between IDFG and the IOGLB. It has not yet ready for signature. The Board asked Commissioner Gibbs to work with the Department on finalizing the MOU and getting it signed. Although there will always be conflict between users of the resource, the MOU will help alleviate some of the conflicts between the two entities and between the general public and the outfitting industry.

Hunter Education State Instructor of the Year Award

BJ Lillibridge, Region 2 hunter education coordinator, presented the Idaho Hunter Education Instructor of the Year Award to Jill Green of Lewiston, Idaho. Jill was certified as an Idaho Hunter Education instructor in November 2000 and since then has been the lead instructor for 10 classes, certifying 166 students. She has assisted with 16 classes, certifying 305 students. Jill coordinates clinics throughout the year and she is an active IDFG reservist. Jill is also certified as an Idaho

Bowhunter instructor, certified in April 2005. Jill puts in 300-500 hours of volunteer time on teaching classes, coordinating and teaching hunting clinics, fly fishing clinics. Other Department employees love to work with her. She is also part of the Latah Wildlife Association and a member of the mountaineering club.

Guided Hunts for Turkey

Don Kemner reported to the Commission on the Department's stance on outfitting and guiding for upland game and waterfowl including turkeys. The Department and Commission has a long-standing position of not supporting outfitting and guiding for upland game and waterfowl. The exception has been granted for forest grouse and chukar, where it is incidental to another outfitted activity such as fishing. However, some outfitters have taken advantage of that and have actually run advertisements for "cast and blast" trips.

Public opinion has been strongly against outfitting for turkeys on public and private lands not deeded to the outfitter. The Idaho Outfitters and Guides Licensing Board has indicated they may request a Forest Service permit to allow outfitting for turkeys on Forest Service land. The Department in series of letters and verbal comments has indicated and reaffirmed to the IOGLB its stance not to support outfitting and guiding for upland game and waterfowl. Staff requested that the Commission review this position and reaffirm the Department's stance.

Commissioner Gibbs commented that this request was asking the Commission to establish policy, and the IOGLB has not had appropriate notice of this. He requested that the Commission put this issue off to another meeting so the IOGLB can prepare information for the Commission's consideration.

Commissioners discussed that the decision on whether to allow outfitting is not up to the Commission. The legal authority is with the IOGLB. The Commission already has a policy. The Department is asking the Commission to reaffirm the position.

06-36 Commissioner Irby moved and Commissioner Power seconded **THAT ITEM #11 REAFFIRMING THE DEPARTMENT'S POSITION ON UPLAND GAME AND WATERFOWL OUTFITTING FOR BOTH THE OUTFITTING INDUSTRY AND THE SPORTSMEN AT LARGE BE ACCEPTED AS PRESENTED**. The motion carried: Ayes -- Wheeler, Irby, McDermott, Power, Watts, Wright. Nays -- Gibbs

Farm Bill Conservation Opportunities

Don Kemner reported on the Sage and Columbian Sharp-tailed Grouse National Priority Area (NPA) (Appendix 39, Exhibit 53). This is a tool of the Conservation Reserve Program. There are currently five NPAs. Sharp-tailed grouse range in Idaho has decreased by 82 percent and 54 percent of their current range is on private land. The USFWS cited the importance of CRP in its decision not to list the grouse under the ESA. The proposed NPA would increase eligibility of landowner offers to enroll in CRP and maintain CRP acres in grouse range. It would use existing CRP funds and is a voluntary, incentive-based approach to at risk species recovery.

Mr. Kemner provided a draft letter to the U.S. Department of Agriculture supporting the proposed NPA (Appendix 39, Exhibit 54). Commissioners were asked to provide any feedback before Chairman Wheeler signs the letter.

Mr. Kemner introduced Jim Teare, Wildlife Biologist for the Clearwater Region who reported on the Department's Farm Bill program (Appendix 39, Exhibit 55). The Department would like to eventually put a Farm Bill Coordinators and Technical Service Providers (TSPs) in each region. The program provides significant wildlife benefits to the state.

The Farm Bill program includes the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), Continuous CRP (CCRP), Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP), Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), and Wetland Reserve Program (WRP). Benefits of participation in these programs include more acres of quality wildlife habitat being established, enhanced and protected; additional technical staff and assistance for USDA service centers; USDA staff benefit from on-site presence of a wildlife biologist; and improved working relationships between Fish and Game and USDA agencies and landowners. The Department has a positive influence on Farm Bill programs at the state and county level. More habitat is being developed without spending more license dollars.

Upcoming work includes new general CRP signup. Old CRP is expiring and there will be opportunity to improve habitat potential in old stands. CCRP continued interest, and the Conservation Security Program (CSP) will assist in developing new habitat projects.

The Department's participation in the Farm Bill programs is working and is resulting in numerous benefits including a strong working relationships with USDA and landowners, many acres of quality wildlife habitat established, and upland game bird numbers increasing. The continuation of the Department's participation in the TSP program depends on USDA funding and continued support from the Commission and Wildlife Bureau. There are a lot of opportunities to expand the TSP program in the state.

Mr. Teare updated the Commission on the Clearwater Pheasant Initiative and provided highlights of the program.

Mr. Kemner commented that Jim Teare received a statewide recognition award from the Soil Conservation District for his work. He is now helping NRCS write a 5-year plan for the WHIP program and to incorporate special funds in the EQIP program for species in conservation need.

RULES

Snake River Spring/Summer Chinook Salmon Run Update

Sharon Kiefer, Anadromous Fish Manager, provided an update on the Spring Chinook Run (Appendix 39, Exhibit 56). The salmon run has taken a remarkable turn. The preseason forecast was for 85,000 adults returning over Bonneville Dam, but this forecast was recently upgraded to 95,000. The run size through May 17 was just over 82,000. This is still running quite a bit behind the 10 year average, but is running ahead of the 2005 return. The Lower Granite Dam return forecast is almost 25,000, which is just a bit higher than the pre-season forecast, which was 22,000. This is running behind the 10 year average and it is too early to compare to 2005. Daily counts at Ice Harbor and Granite Dams are running 1,000 fish per day.

For whatever reason, this run was extremely late (almost 2 weeks late). It is still too early to estimate final state harvest share for spring Chinook fisheries, but there is a enough forecast to initiate fishing on the strength of PIT tag data. The state does have some surplus fish, which we share with treaty fishermen.

Staff will continue monitoring the run. Spring Chinook is counted up to June 15. Staff recommends a conference call for rulemaking in June for summer Chinook. Don't anticipate a late run for summer Chinook.

Ms. Kiefer presented staff recommendations for spring Chinook fisheries (Appendix 39, Exhibit 57). There will be no change from the 2005 Spring Chinook Salmon Season & Rules, unless otherwise noted in the staff recommendation, no change in boundaries from last year, and methods of take have not changed. It is a conservative proposal, but given the way the run started, staff felt that was the best approach. Staff will monitor the run closely and come back to the Commission if warranted.

06-37 Commissioner Irby moved and Commissioner McDermott seconded a motion **TO ADOPT STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS AS PRESENTED (Appendix 39, Exhibit 57)**. The motion carried unanimously.

REPORTS

Disabled License Rule

Ms. Kiefer provided Commissioners with a draft rule to address the new criteria for those seeking a reduced fee disabled license (Appendix 39, Exhibit 58). Commissioners will review the rule and provide feedback to Ms. Kiefer regarding any concerns or questions.

FY '07 Budget Approval

Jim Lau, Chief, Bureau of Administration, summarized the Department's operating budget for fiscal year 2007 and asked for the Commission's approval (Appendix 39, Exhibit 59).

06-38 Commissioner Gibbs moved and Commissioner Wright seconded a motion **TO ACCEPT STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FISCAL 2007 OPERATING BUDGET**. The motion carried in a unanimous vote.

Budget Adjustment

The Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation donated \$20,000 to the Department to assist with costs associated with capture, radio-collaring, and monitoring of mule deer and elk populations in selected study sties. Staff is seeking Commission approval to increase the budget in this amount.

06-39 Commissioner Wright moved and Commissioner Irby seconded a motion **TO APPROVE THE BUDGET ADJUSTMENT AS PRESENTED**. The motion carried unanimously.

Bonus Points

Craig Wiedmeier presented a draft rule on bonus point implementation for Commission review (Appendix 39, Exhibit 60).

The Director commented that the sticking point this past year was that there was not a proposed rule with details for legislators to consider.

The Commission discussed letting interested legislator(s) take this on. The Commission did the best they could, but it did not proceed when the Senate Resources and Environment Committee voted against it. Commissioners concurred that the Commission and Department can assist, but to further effort on this issue should be in the hands of interested legislators.

License System Update

Jim Lau, Administration Bureau Chief, reported that the Department has selected Outdoor Central as the new license system provider. The new system will use Internet connectivity rather than satellite communications. It was a good decision five years ago, but new capability for Internet connection now exists. The final contract is still in negotiations, so the cost has not yet been finalized. It will likely be approximately 30% more than the current GTECH contract over the five year contract period.

Mr. Lau introduced the representatives from Outdoor Central -- Dan Cook, Jim Bressoud, the project manager for implementation, and Don Purdue, Executive VP of Central Bank, Outdoor Central's parent company. They are solely focused on outdoor wildlife hunting and fishing license automation. They don't provide lottery systems. They are in 21 states, and have recently won contracts in the west including, Oregon, Washington, California, and Wyoming.

The schedule for implementation is for a March 1, 2007 switchover to the new system. There will be a pilot before then. They have a good handle on the capabilities of the current system and the improvements that need to be made. The system will be a web-based, touch screen system. They are very optimistic about the system and have a first-class team on the project. Mr. Cook commented that the Department is a very capable agency with respect to technology. The Department also has one of the most complex license structures as do most Western states.

Mr. Cook explained that Outdoor Central will build software to deal with fluctuations and spikes in sales. They invest in the system to handle peak times. Slowdowns can be due to many reasons. The goal is to plan as well as possible for those occurrences. There is redundancy built in at every level. There is not a paper backup system. The Department could handle a slowdown in a similar manner as previously and give a handwritten license with the direction that they should get proper license as soon as practical.

Commissioners were invited to look at the demonstration system that Outdoor Central had set up for Commissioners to test.

The meeting recessed at 4:53 p.m.

May 19, 2006

The meeting was called to order by Vice Chairman Wayne Wright at 9:17 a.m. with Commissioners Watts, Gibbs, McDermott, Irby, and Power present.

REPORTS

Lake Pend Oreille Fishery Recovery Efforts

Chairman Wheeler joined the meeting at 9:20 a.m.

Chip Corsi, Panhandle Regional Supervisor presented the history and status of kokanee in Lake Pend Oreille (Appendix 39, Exhibit 61). Kokanee eggs have increased and egg to fry survival has increased 3 – 5x, but kokanee continue to decline. The decline in kokanee in the Lake is a predation issue. There are too many lake trout & too many rainbow trout eating too many kokanee.

Lake trout were first introduced into the lake in 1925. Creel surveys between 1991 and 2002 showed a significant increase in lake trout. In 2003, the Region did the first Trapnetting. The population estimate showed over 8,000 lake trout over 20 inches. By 2006, the population estimate was over 18,000. Lake trout population increased due to the onset of mysis shrimp.

The Department is actively managing to increase the kokanee population through liberalizing rules on predators, closing the kokanee fishery, and supplementing with hatchery fish. A task force developed an angler incentive program to encourage harvest of lake trout and rainbow trout. The Region is now removing lake trout with commercial gear.

The angler incentive program provides monetary rewards for anglers catching rainbow and lake trout. The program has been effective thus far, but there is a need to harvest about 5,000 rainbow trout.

Mr. Corsi compared Lake Pend Oreille with Coeur d'Alene and Priest Lakes to demonstrate the economic impact of the kokanee fishery to the Region.

The bottom line is to reduce predation on kokanee by 50 tons annually. Rainbow trout and lake trout are the two primary predators. Current targets are to harvest at least 50% of the lake trout and rainbow trout to reduce predation and slow growth of the lake trout population – lake trout are more difficult to address. They will need to be managed at a suppressed level for the long term. There is a good start on reducing the rainbow trout population.

Commissioner McDermott commented that Lake Pend Oreille is the jewel of the northwest. There are a lot of people heavily invested in what happens to the Lake. He shared an analysis of public comment on the Department's proposals. There is significant concern over catching trophy fish in the streams. But, if the kokanee go, so will the trophy rainbow and lake trout.

RULES

Fishing Regulation Changes

Steve Yundt, State Fish Manager, presented the rule changes being proposed. The Yankee Fork Dredge Ponds are currently open year round. There are adult steelhead that migrate up to the ponds in the spring. Staff is proposing to implement the standard stream season – open Saturday of Memorial Day weekend through November 30 to protect the spawning steelhead.

06-40 Commissioner Power moved and Commissioner Irby seconded a motion **TO ADOPT AS TEMPORARY RULES STAFF RECOMMENDATION TO CLOSE THE YANKEE FORK DREDGE PONDS TO STEELHEAD FISHING UNTIL THE END OF MAY AS A CONSERVATION MEASURE TO AVOID THE HARVEST OF THESE LISTED FISH.** The motion carried unanimously.

Regulation for LPO are aimed at preserving the kokanee fishery. Mr. Yundt presented staff proposals for Lake Pend Oreille (Appendix 39, Exhibit 62). The Director can close seasons or change bag limits any time the Department needs to address a biological emergency.

06-41 Commissioner McDermott moved and Commissioner Gibbs seconded a motion **TO ADOPT AS TEMPORARY RULES STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS ON REGULATION CHANGES FOR LAKE PEND OREILLE WITH TWO CONDITIONS – 1) THAT THE COMMISSION REEVALUATE AT OR BEFORE THE JANUARY 2007 MEETING THE NEED TO IMPLEMENT THE PROPOSED CHANGES FOR THE LOWER CLARK FORK RIVER AND THREE TRIBUTARY STREAMS (GROUSE CREEK, LIGHTNING CREEK, AND PACK RIVER), AND 2) IF THE RESULTS OF THE ANGLER HARVEST INCENTIVE PROGRAM ARE MET BY THE ANGLERS THAT WE CLOSE THOSE TRIBUTARY STREAMS AS THEY HAVE BEEN IN THE PAST.** The motion carried in a unanimous vote.

Land Acquisitions

Gregg Servheen presented a group of land acquisition projects for the Commission's approval (Appendix 39, Exhibit 63). These include the Conner and Shields projects using BPA wildlife mitigation funds; the Moen property being acquired in partnership with The Nature Conservancy; the Kamiah Pond exchange with Flying B Ranch; and the Vickery exchange. These acquisitions are all poised to close upon Commission approval.

Commissioner Watts commented that the exchanges make sense, but the other three raise the question about purchasing property without the lands plan in place. Commissioner Power commented that the Moen property acquisition is important for river access and ties in two diversions for water mitigation and important salmon spawning. There is full support in the region.

06-42 Commissioner Gibbs moved and Commissioner Power seconded a motion **TO ACCEPT STAFF RECOMMENDATION ON THE PROPOSED LAND ACQUISITIONS.** The motion carried in a unanimous vote.

REPORTS

Legislative Update

Sharon Kiefer did a recap of the 2006 legislative session (Appendix 39, Exhibit 64). Ms. Kiefer reported that as a member of the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission, there are two governor's appointees. These had been Chairman Wheeler and Representative George Eskridge. Representative Eskridge's term completed, and the new appointee is Senator Joe Stegner from Lewiston. An in-state PSMFC meeting is scheduled in Boise in early June.

Chairman Wheeler asked Ms. Kiefer to be considering the legal and statutory issues regarding the Commission's ability to buy and sell land.

The Director commented that the constitutional amendment to hunt and fish will be back next session. Staff have begun to do the research. The vast majority of sportsmen want something and it would be in the Department's best interest to help craft something we can support. A lot has happened nationally with the right to hunt and fish. Staff will compile some facts on the Commission's position on the concept. Chairman Wheeler commented that the Commission was in the middle on the amendment last session because it went through numerous changes. There are legal issues that complicate the situation.

Idaho Fish and Wildlife Foundation Report

Commissioner Wright reported as a board member of the Idaho Fish and Wildlife Foundation that the Foundation remains solidly behind the principal of pursuing a new headquarters building procurement and leasing the building to the Department as they have done for several of the regions.

The Foundation's mission is: 1) to promote fish and wildlife education; 2) to enhance fish and wildlife habitat; 3) to create unique opportunities to experience fish and wildlife. To this end, the Foundation has been involved in several mitigation projects, and has acquired property. Recently, the Springfield hatchery was donated to the Foundation and the Department will manage it. That facility is worth \$2 million. These efforts help the Department and the citizens of Idaho. The Foundation's challenge is how to raise money. This year's online auction proceeds will be used for hunter education and shooting ranges.

It is important that when the Foundation meets in the regions, that region's commissioner attend. The next meeting is in Coeur d'Alene August 11-12, and Commissioner Wright asked Commissioner McDermott to attend. If any Commissioners would like to attend, they are welcome.

Commissioner Gibbs commented that he has attended meetings, and it was a good experience. It is a good idea to interact with that group. The Commission and Foundation Board may want to look into having the November Foundation meeting in Lewiston concurrent with the Commission meeting so the two groups can meet for a social function. Commissioner Wright and the Director will discuss the concept. Commissioner Wright will bring financial statements for the Foundation to the next meeting.

New Headquarters Building Proposal

Jim Lau reported that the Idaho Fish and Wildlife Foundation has committed to submit a proposal once the Department formally issues a Request for Proposals (RFP) for office space through the Department of Public Works. The driving force behind the need for a new facility is that the Park

Street building is a leased facility, and the lease expires in June 2008. The building is 40+ years old and is deteriorating.

The Department has looked at alternatives for what to do when that lease expires. Currently rental is about \$300,000 per year. One option considered was to expand the existing Walnut Street building, but that was not feasible from an engineering perspective. It is an old building and it would be costly to bring it up to standard. Another option would be to sell the existing owned building (Walnut Street) and consider relocation of the headquarters building. The primary concern is that the current location is convenient to the public, the legislature, and is adjacent to the MK Nature Center. There is concern about vacating the area and its impact on the Nature Center. There is a strong preference to stay at the current location.

The third option is to build a new office at the current site. If the Foundation is the successful bidder on the RFP, the building would be approximately 80,000 square feet. This is costly in the short-term but makes sense in the long run. Based on prelim numbers from the Foundation, the Department could lease the building over a 24-year term at \$14.00/sq. ft. That rate is less than what we are currently paying on the building we lease, which is \$14.12/sq. ft. After 20 years of leasing, the Department would have paid nearly as much as we would for the new building. The IFWF proposal would have a bargain option at the end of the lease to sell the building to the Department. The annual lease costs under this proposal are slightly higher than they would be with a straight lease, but at the end of the 24 year period, the Department will own the building.

The cost of the new building will result in a \$765,000 increase in yearly rental cost. In year one, the Department would also need a one-time \$300,000 addendum for prepayment on the new building. The fiscal year 2008 budget takes this cost into account. The FY '08 is a balanced budget and assumes this cost without a fee increase. If the Commission chooses, the Department will pursue a fee increase. The Department is prepared to move ahead regardless of whether a fee increase is approved.

The reality is that the Department has probably put off addressing the need for a new headquarters building longer than it should have. Interest rates are higher but still reasonable. The Department could generate \$75,000 – \$100,000 income from space leased to the Boise School District and other agencies that would be interested in leasing space in the new building.

The inflation increase that was received in last year's budget totaled \$430,000. Of that, \$200,000-\$25,000 was license funded and could be made available to help with the new building costs for the first year. The Department could also use the income from asset sales that are pending to help offset the cost in the short-term. The cost of rental is also offset by the overhead for federal programs which is applied to rental costs and the amount already being paid for the Park Building. There is additional cost, but the alternative is to find other space to lease which is going to be more expensive in the Boise market.

The Director has spoken to the Senate Pro-tem, the co-chairs of JFAC, and the germane committee chairs. They all said they understand the issue and advised the Department to have a good justification. There is a June meeting of JFAC in Jerome and staff will discuss the issue with them at that meeting.

Commissioners discussed the need to have a good, clear justification especially in light of the plan to ask for a fee increase next year. Commissioners reached consensus that the Department should pursue a new headquarters building.

The Director commented that the Department will do this in the most cost effective manner possible.

National Hunting and Fishing Survey

The Director brought to the Commission's attention that there is a national survey being conducted by the USFWS. This is a survey by state that is done once every 5 years. The public often complains to the Department about the nature and implication of the questions, but this is not a Department effort, and we have no control over the questions.

Mule Deer Hunter Survey Review

Jim Unsworth, Wildlife Bureau Chief, presented information on the Department's desire to conduct a mule deer hunter opinion survey (Appendix 39, Exhibit 65). The Department's last survey was in 1987/88. An elk survey was done at the same time. Those results have guided the department on zones for elk and on mule deer efforts. The plans need to be updated as some things have changed. In 1988, 82% of hunters said they never used ATVs when hunting. Now that number is about 60% who always or sometimes use ATVs.

The survey will be used to assess current satisfaction, understand mule deer hunter motivations, assess attitudes, identify management preferences, identify acceptance levels for various management options, and it will provide foundation for revising mule deer management plan.

The survey will be done using a random sample of mule deer hunters and a targeted random sample of elk hunters. There will be an adequate sample size for regional precision. The plan is to contract with a university to develop and implement the survey at a cost of approximately \$75,000.

The draft set of information needs is done. Staff would like the Commission to review this along with the previous survey and provide feedback this month. The Department will solicit sportsmen input in the May-June timeframe to determine if the survey will address the areas sportsmen are interested in. The RFP will be finalized in June and a contract University selected by August. The survey will take place October-December 2006 with results analyzed January – March 2007, and a final report due in April 2007.

Mr. Unsworth updated the Commission on coyote removal, shrub planting, and hunter harvest in last year's hunting season.

RULES

2006 Antlerless Mule Deer Harvest Review

Jim Unsworth reviewed deer survival over the past winter (Appendix 39, Exhibit 66). Monitoring efforts included 246 radio-collared fawns, 380 radio-collared adult does, aerial surveys and field observations. 40% survival is the long-haul average for mule deer. Sample sizes are pretty low so there is quite a bit of variability.

Most does have two fawns per year. Usually, one of those dies within the first few weeks. Of the fawns who die, 36% die of malnutrition, and 19% die of predation (3%-mtn. Lion, 15% coyote, 1% wolves). Adult does usually survive at high rates. Garden Valley experienced high mortality last winter. Adult doe mortality is mainly due to malnutrition and mountain lion predation. Overall survival of mule deer fawns was lower than average.

The Department recommends that backing off on some antlerless seasons and reducing 2006 antlerless harvest in Units 64, 67, 78 and reduce 2006 antlered & antlerless harvest in Units 33, 34, and 35.

Hunt Type	Hunt Number	Units	Proposed Change
General		33, 34, 35	Close either-sex Youth ONLY hunt.
Controlled	1068	33, 34, 35	Reduce antlered permits from 149 to 74.
Controlled	1067	56, 70, 73, 73A, 78	Remove Unit 78 from list of eligible units in Youth ONLY hunt.
Controlled	1058	67	Reduce antlerless permits from 200 to 50.
Controlled	1061	64, 67	Reduce either-sex permits from 200 to 100.

Commissioners discussed closing all doe seasons in the units with low doe survival. It would not have a big biological impact but would send a message. However, it would be problematic to prosecute violators because the regulations are printed and distributed. Staff tries to avoid general season closures because they are more difficult to handle.

Commissioner Gibbs commented that there have been very few controlled hunt applications sold for controlled hunt 1067. He would like to minimize the problem of confusing sportsmen but minimizing doe harvest allowed.

The Director commented that rather than sending the message that there is a mule deer crisis, the approach should be to educate the public that this year's mortality is in range of variability, but the Department is monitoring mule deer closely and managing as tightly as possible.

06-43 Commissioner Gibbs moved and Commissioner Wright seconded **TO ACCEPT STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS ON CONTROLLED HUNT 1067 BUT TO ELIMINATE UNIT 78 WITH THE CAVEAT THAT IF THE PERMITS DON'T SELL IN THE FIRST DRAWING, LEFTOVER PERMITS WILL NOT BE SOLD THIS YEAR ON THAT HUNT.** The motion carried in a unanimous vote.

06-44 Commissioner Watts moved and Commissioner Gibbs seconded **TO CLOSE DOE HUNTING IN UNITS 33, 34, 35 TO INCLUDE YOUTH HUNT AND ARCHERY HUNT AND TO**

ACCEPT STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS ON CONTROLLED HUNT #1068. The motion carried in a unanimous vote.

06-45 Commissioner Wright moved and Commissioner Power seconded **TO ACCEPT STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS WITH CHANGES ALREADY NOTED.** The motion carried in a unanimous vote.

Mr. Unsworth reported that staff will meet with USFWS on the wolf proposal. USFWS is in the process of reviewing the Department's proposal for wolf control in the Lolo Zone. Idaho has had approximately 9 head of livestock killed around the state and control action on 9 wolves over the last few months. The Department is trying to be as flexible and responsive as possible and is working to build confidence with the public.

Commission Staff Support

Roger Fuhrman, Communication Bureau Chief, reviewed the process for staff support that was discussed at the November Commission meeting. He asked for Commission feedback.

Commissioner Wright commented that it is be important to have notes available to at least the regional offices after the Commission meetings to make sure people know what is going on, especially on the big issues.

Mr. Fuhrman noted that every Monday following the Commission meeting, the Deputy Director has a conference call with Regional Supervisors to brief them on the meeting.

Agenda items July Commission Meeting

- Weapons Technology.
- Field trip down the South Fork of the Snake River and to look at mule deer habitat
- Update on access and LAP work in the Magic Valley – Commissioner Wright commented that there is not pilot project yet, but the Region is working on concepts.
- ATV Subcommittee Report
- Disability Issues
- Mule Deer Initiative Update

Chairman Wheeler commented that he will have a really good personal friend leave the Commission at the end of June. Commissioner Gibbs will be missed.

06-46 Commissioner Wright moved and Commissioner Power seconded a motion **TO HOLD AN EXECUTIVE SESSION PURSUANT TO IDAPA CODE 67 2345(1)(C) PERTAINING TO LAND ACQUISITIONS.** The motion carried in a unanimous vote.

The meeting adjourned at 12:24 p.m.

Cameron Wheeler, Chairman

Steve Huffaker, Secretary